



fax program

REDROCK FAXNOW! 2000

Overall, both more powerful and more convenient than 'real' fax machines

“Can you send me a fax?” Words that bring a groan to the lips of any Internet user. Why can't people just use e-mail, saving all that time and paper? Well, often it's because some documents require signatures, some exist only on paper, and sometimes we need to deal with people who've yet to embrace the wonders of the Internet.

But between them, your modem and RedRock's FaxNow! can replace that old-fashioned fax machine – and you might even save some money into the bargain. It's available in two versions: Version 5 is designed for networked fax management and multiple users, while FaxNow! 2000 (the version reviewed here) is aimed at single users.

Sending and receiving

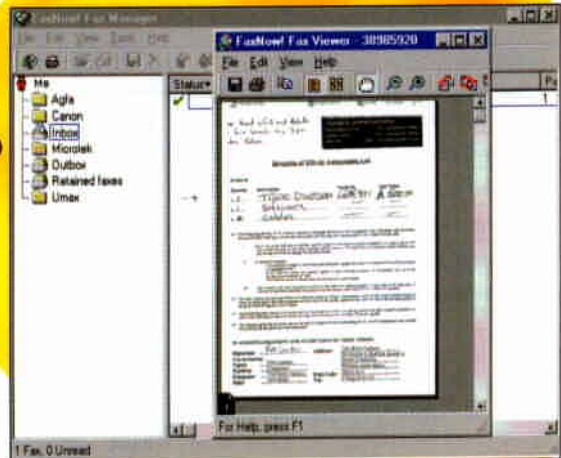
How does it work? Like other fax programs, it adds a printer driver to your system, one that produces a digitised image of your document rather than a physical print. Your modem then dials up the number of the fax machine it's to be sent to, and the image is transmitted. The receiving machine receives and prints it just like any other fax.

Fax numbers are stored in FaxNow!'s PhoneBook application. You can create a number of PhoneBooks, and you can set up 'groups' of people in a PhoneBook to speed up bulk faxing. You can even set up a link to your MAPI phonebook – Microsoft Outlook, for example – so there's no need to duplicate fax numbers and other contact information in two separate files.

The only disadvantage with this is that looking up fax numbers takes a little longer, and you can't edit records directly – you have to do that in Outlook.

Receiving faxes is even more painless. As long as FaxNow!'s Fax Modem Server is running (it's installed as an automatic startup item, so it should

Minimum requirements: Pentium with 16Mb RAM, Win95/98/NT 4.0
Tested on: Pentium III 450 with 128Mb RAM, Win98



FaxNow! 2000 handles incoming faxes like your e-mail program handles e-mails. You can view and print them via their own windows, and store them in a set of user-defined folders.

PRICE: £50 EX VAT: £43 SUPPLIER: RedRock Technologies PHONE: 01908 246 401 WWW: www.redrock.co.uk

be), the software will detect incoming faxes, receive them and display them in its FaxManager window. Here you can view faxes, print them and file them in any number of user-defined folders.

That's not the end of the story, though, because FaxNow! has some rather clever tricks up its sleeve. For a start, it lets you fax documents via e-mail. Let's say you want to fax a copy of a Word document to someone who doesn't have Word and doesn't have a fax machine, either. All you have to do is print the document using the FaxNow! printer driver, choose your recipient, choose the e-mail option for sending your fax and let the software get on with it. Your recipient will then get an e-mail message with the fax attached as an executable ViewNow file – it includes its own viewer.

This is all fine and dandy, of course, if your recipient is using a PC. If not, they're a bit stuck. It might have been nice to include an option for attaching your fax as a JPEG, a file format which can be read on just about anything.

That's soon forgotten about when you take a close look at the program's routing options. Let's say you're out of the office all day, but you're expecting an important fax. You can get FaxNow! to route it automatically to another fax machine, or re-route it as an e-mail. As long as you've got your laptop with you, or you've got access to a PC configured for your e-mail account, you can check your faxes wherever you are.

Saving cash

The explosion of the Internet and the deregulation of the telecoms industry has led to two further innovations. If you set up an account with an Internet Fax Service Provider, you can send faxes via the Internet instead of conventional phone lines – which could mean big savings if you regularly fax abroad. Similarly, if you use a third party telecoms provider you can opt for low-cost routing, usually by just inserting a special prefix in front of the fax number.

And you can save more money by scheduling your faxes for off-peak times. Not a major issue for most of us, maybe, but a definite bonus for those who routinely fax lots of documents to lots of people.

There are times when fax software will still prove more fiddly to use than a conventional fax machine. You need to leave your PC on at all times to receive faxes, for example, and you'll have to scan in paper-only documents first (though, having said that, FaxNow! does incorporate a TWAIN-based Fax to Scan feature to speed this up). But the program's Express Fax option for quick messages, a range of cover sheets (and the ability to design your own) and its range of routing and automation tools make it, overall, both more powerful and more convenient than 'real' fax machines. A deserving winner of a Performance Award.

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You can send quick messages via an ExpressFax. You'll find this option, and the other FaxNow! applications, on the pop up menu displayed by the program's System Tray icon.



PC Plus

VERDICT

FAXNOW 2000

For Fax management, automation, routing options

Against Needs an Internet Fax Service Provider for Internet faxing

Range of features	10
Ease of use	8
Documentation	7
Performance	10
Value for money	9

9/10